



Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
286 Water Street  
11 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel. (207) 287-8016  
Fax (207) 287-9058; TTY (800) 606-0215

## **Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund Advisory Council Meeting**

**Location: MEHAF 150 Capital Street Augusta**

**September 20, 2013**

**9:00 to 11:00 AM**

**Attendees:** Barbara Leonard (Chair), MaryAnn Amrich, Maureen Brown, Peter Doran, Gail Lombardi, Amber McAllister, Michelle Polascek; **Staff:** Andy Smith, Eric Frohmberg, Karyn Butts  
**Absent:** Heather Lindkvist, Karen Ridder, Syd Sewall

### **I. Introductions**

Barbara Leonard convened the group and led introductions. Eric Frohmberg, Manager of the Maine CDC's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program reviewed the agenda and distributed a packet of updated lead poisoning data for the council's reference.

### **II. Finances**

Andy Smith, director of the Maine CDC's Environmental and Occupational Health Programs (EOHP), presented information about changes to the funding situation that occurred since the May meeting. Of note, EOHP was recently awarded a U.S. CDC grant to conduct well water safety work. The grant is the first federal grant in the state to do well water safety work and provides about \$150,000 a year for the next two years. The primary purpose of the grant is to build community-level capacity for well water safety, and the work is modeled on the successful community-level lead poisoning prevention work supported by the Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund.

The addition of the well water safety funding to EOHP's overall funding mix allows the group to better absorb cuts in funding to other programs, namely the Environmental Public Health Tracking Program and the Adult Blood Lead Surveillance program, which in turn allows EOHP to maintain current capacity and funding for programs supported by the Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund.

The council also briefly discussed the state of federal funding for environmental health, and Barbara Leonard made a recommendation that Andy Smith speak with Paul Kuehnert, Senior Program Officer for public health, at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to better understand the public and private landscape of funding for environmental health.

### **III. Initiatives for the Next Year**

Eric Frohmberg began a review of the LPPF-funded activities according to the categories described below.

#### **A. Activities Alignment with Statutory Mandates**

The council reviewed the matrix of activities and statutory requirements, which allow for a high-level view of how current activities satisfy those requirements. The following points were made during the discussion of the matrix.

1. In general, the matrix is helpful. The council expressed interest in capturing more information on the matrix, including a time dimension, resource allocations, and narrative summaries of activities.
  - *Action Item: Staff will explore adding information to the matrix.*
2. The council noted that there are no activities currently underway relative to the requirement for “Funding an assessment of current uses of lead and the availability, effectiveness and affordability of lead-free alternatives.” Eric Frohmberg explained that an assessment of this type would typically fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Protection and there has been no work to date on such an assessment because of the overwhelming amount of evidence that shows that nearly all cases of lead poisoning in Maine children come from lead paint in old homes. In addition, while there had been concern in the past about lead in other consumer products such as toys, LPPF funds have not been used to support such an assessment, because of relevant legislation in recent years as well as federal agency (Consumer Product Safety Commission) oversight of lead in consumer products.

The council expressed comfort in the reasoning behind the lack of activity in this area, but asked staff to prepare more supporting materials for the next meeting in order to better provide guidance.

- *Action Items: Staff will prepare supporting statutory information to present to the council at the next meeting; Chair will add an agenda item for the next meeting for the discussion of these statutes.*

#### **B. Major Ongoing Activities**

Eric then led the group through a discussion and slide presentation of current ongoing activities supported by the Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund. The following are highlights from the presentation.

##### **1. Community Funding**

- 5 High Density Area Contracts at \$28,750 (Total: \$143,750)
- 4 Second Tier Area Contracts at \$15,125 (Total: \$60,500)
- 8 Public Health District Contracts at \$6,500 (Total: \$52,000)
- 26 Local Service Area Contracts at \$2,000 (Total: \$52,000)

The group discussed how work in Sanford (a high-density area) is now being done by the Healthy Maine Partnership (HMP) in Saco/Biddeford as part of a reduction in resources at the Sanford HMP. As a result, the Saco/Biddeford HMP now receives 50% more funding to cover activities in Sanford. The group also recalled discussions from earlier meetings about the challenges in replicating the high-density area model in Second Tier Areas.

In addition, Eric presented data on the reduction in rates of Childhood Lead Poisoning in High Density Areas, noting that rates are declining in all areas faster than the state average except in Lewiston/Auburn and Saco/Biddeford, and remarked that over the next year staff will explore devoting more resources and attention to efforts in Biddeford.

**2. Measures to Reduce Exposures to Lead – Lead Dust Testing**

Eric presented results from the various lead dust testing initiatives supported by the Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund, including landlord testing, home lead dust testing offered through the targeted mailing, facilitated testing, and dust testing for children with blood lead levels between 10 and 14 ug/dl. Eric also explained that in the current fiscal year, free home lead dust testing will be offered to children with venous blood lead levels between 5 and 9 ug/dl. During the discussion of these activities, the council asked for additional information about the success of lead dust testing for children identified with blood lead levels between 10 and 14 ug/dl in keeping children from increasing their blood lead level (i.e., how many children in the 10-14 ug/dl category whose parents do a home lead dust test kit end up having a blood lead level above 15 ug/dl?).

**3. Measures to Reduce Exposures to Lead – Environmental Investigations**

LPPF resources continue to support environmental investigations in units and buildings where children are identified with a blood lead level greater than or equal to 15 ug/dl. In the coming year in Lewiston, the threshold will be reduced to a persistent blood lead level of greater than or equal to 10 ug/dl. Lowering the threshold is in direct response to stagnant lead poisoning rates in Lewiston, with estimates based on previous year's data indicating that the change will result in inspections in 10 additional units per year.

**4. Measures to Prevent Occupational Exposures to Lead – Adult Blood Lead Surveillance**

Eric reminded the group that EOHP no longer receives federal funding from National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to administer the Adult Blood Lead Surveillance (ABLES) system. Because of the reduction in funding, LPPF funds are used to support the data collection and management and some of the occupational health physician assigned to this area.

**5. Funding for Educational Programs for Workers and Landlords – Ongoing Support of the Lead Safe Housing Registry (LSHR)**

The LSHR has been operational through the MaineHousingSearch.org website for about one year and will continue to operate in its current state.

### **C. Evaluation**

Eric then gave the council an overview of the plan to complete the next major evaluation report of LPPF-supported activities. Staff will continue ongoing evaluation of initiatives and outcomes, and publish a comprehensive, formal report, as scheduled, in 2015. To prepare for the report, staff are currently reviewing and revising the existing evaluation plan to bring it inline with changes to activities that have occurred since the plan was originally drafted in 2010. Staff will provide the updated plan to the council for their review and discussion at the winter council meeting.

Further, Eric explained that staff are exploring using the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) to measure changes in behavior related to lead poisoning prevention in the state as part of the evaluation plan going forward.

Finally, Eric discussed how the epidemiology staff supported by LPPF resources will help the program fold evaluation measures into the lead poisoning surveillance plan, provide feedback on the appropriateness and feasibility of measures, and conduct many of the analyses required for the evaluation.

### **D. Discussion**

To kick off the discussion of the major ongoing programs, Eric summarized the challenges to maintaining and expanding LPPF supported initiatives, focusing principally on the losses of funding that are impacting the LPPF bottom line. The council reviewed a pie chart showing the distribution of LPPF resources and recalled the current total budget is \$791,517. On the topic of the budget, the council expressed their comfort with the current projects and activities and the corresponding allocation of resources.

The council also expressed interest in hearing updates at future meetings about work to incorporate prevention activities focused on children with blood lead levels between 5 and 9 ug/dl.

Finally, the council discussed Second Tier Areas, specifically about how staff plan to re-strategize the work of the community partners in these areas since the High Density Area model does not seem to replicate well in STAs. Staff explained that over the next year they will work with current partners to revamp the approach in these areas, figure out ways to get better data to partners, and develop a path forward.

## **IV. Lewiston**

During this portion of the meeting, Eric reviewed the many activities that are currently underway in Lewiston. The following is a summary of those activities.

- The lead program will be lowering the threshold for environmental investigations to units where children with a blood lead level of 10 ug/dl live, and additional units in those buildings. Staff project that this will yield investigations in an additional 10 units per year.
- The Lead Subcommittee of the Lewiston Public Health Committee continues to meet, with significant participation and leadership when appropriate from the state lead program. The subcommittee has made presentations at city council meetings and is

working toward establishing productive relationships with Lewiston Code Enforcement and individual landlords of properties in the downtown area. In addition, the subcommittee is working with the Lewiston Mayor to participate in a round table with landlords about housing issues.

- A chemistry professor at Bates College did a soil testing project to identify lead contamination in soil around the city. Generally levels were lower than had been found in Portland soils.
- With funding from the Gorman Foundation and with technical assistance from the National Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, several community organizations in Lewiston are exploring becoming a Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) site. The GHHI model grew out of the Coalition's work in Baltimore and Providence to leverage, and braid together, housing funding from various local, state, and federal agencies to improve housing conditions in these communities and make it easier for landlords to access multiple funding sources at one time. If Lewiston adopts the model, they will designate someone to be an "Outcomes Broker" who will facilitate stakeholder relationships and secure funding. Staff from the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program have been involved in the evaluation of the model and are in discussion about how to support the model, if at all, should it be implemented.
- Little is known about what exactly the National Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning is being funded to do for Lewiston by the Gorman Foundation. Local partners continue to press the Coalition to find out more, but they think the Coalition will be developing a plan to address lead poisoning in Lewiston.

Eric and Andy made the point that the amount of activity and the number of stakeholders involved at all levels and from so many sectors is unprecedented and very encouraging. Staff from the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program continue to support the process and stakeholders by providing data, expertise, and leadership.

Amber McAllister from Maine State Housing Authority expressed interest in being heavily involved in activities in Lewiston to overcome barriers they have had in reaching landlords and to make sure available funding through the Lead Hazard Control Grant gets used.

## **V. Next Steps**

The council discussed what business to cover in the next meeting and the timing for that meeting. The council recommended the following be included on the agenda.

- Evaluation update
- Detailed discussion of the LPPF statute related to the assessment of the current uses of lead and the availability of lead-free alternatives
- Update on the Second Tier Areas
- Update on activities in Lewiston
- Review of new or updated data products (e.g., data portal, analysis of children with blood lead levels of 5-9 ug/dl)

Staff should distribute the evaluation plan and materials related to the discussion of statutory mandates in advance of the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45.